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## Oval

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### *Silly Putty*

It came in a plastic egg that fit in your palm, split lengthwise. Inside, it lay protoplasmic, fetal pink. It didn't harden or pull apart like clay. When you bit into it, your eyetooth sank and then popped through, as through a rubber lip. We pulled it like taffy, rolled it into worms or into balls we bounced off the floor or desktop. We pressed it down onto newspaper and then peeled it away, drawing up the faces of Nancy and Sluggo, Snoopy, Archie and Veronica, a bold headline letter, a scrap of news. Then we'd stretch it, distorting the faces, elongating the story into parody. Finally we'd fold it into a mouth that chewed and swallowed letters and colors, working them back into the pink, graying it to beige. Putty took it all in, even the funnies we didn't understand, the news we wouldn't hear for years.

### *Fractured Skull*

If there were a film it would show Mary's head ricocheting back off the tree and hitting mine, the back ridge of her skull slamming into my broad, flat forehead. The big kids got blamed for letting us go down on the toboggan without one of them. How new we were, to have hung on as the tree rushed toward us, to have been too frightened, too rapt in speed simply to fall off, roll away into the snow. I had a big lump, navy blue and green. Mary had a fractured skull. She hadn't yet shed her cloudy baby tongue, so she said it was *fvack-shode*. She disappeared from kindergarten for long weeks, and we felt her absence like a small ghost. When she came back, wearing a soft pink-and-white wool hat, it was as if she were an angel returned from some edge we hadn't known about, where her head, now fuzzy bald like a new chick's, had cracked and some of her pale lisping life had seeped out.

*Rabbit Egg*

The book was large and thin, shiny dark green, and it had no words. A baby rabbit, small and brown, curled inside an egg, fast asleep. Outside, in the world, a duck studied the egg lovingly. The duck pecked and kicked at it, jumped on it, rolled it down a hill, but the shell held and the rabbit slept, curled into itself, bigger and bigger for every page. Finally the rabbit was full-grown, still cramped inside the now-huge egg, quiet, four feet pressing against the inside of the shell like a giant pushing against the pearly shell of a sky, having outgrown a perfect, fragile world. The egg cracked, finally, and rabbit woke to duck, to this weird love waiting as if it were meant to be. 